

## The Appearance and Disappearance of Ancient Coins in India

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### Introduction

"Numismatics" may be a new subject to India, but not coins or currency, which have been in circulation since Vedic period throughout India<sup>1</sup>. Surprisingly, no coins of Vedic period has been found, however, the Vedic gods and goddesses have been depicted in the coins of ancient civilizations as discussed below:

These are Vedic deities found on the Greek coins Krishna (LHS), and Balarama (RHS), both issued by Agathocles, from Ai Khanoum, Afghanistan and dated to 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. There have been coins found in Central Asia, Greece, Rome, Afghanistan etc., depicting Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

Other examples are shown below:



A Central Asian  
coin – 205 CE



Claimed as Greek Goddess as  
depicted in the coin of  
Antimachus (c.150 BCE)



Faustina, declared a  
goddess by the  
Senate of Rome



B. N. Mukherjee<sup>2</sup> has shown how "Indian Goddess" has been depicted in ~~different~~ ancient coins of pre-Christian civilizations. The goddess is appearing as Nana in Babylonian-Sumeria, Ishtar in Akkadian-Assyrian, Anahata in Persian civilizations in sculptures, coins, medals etc. They have striking similarities with Indian-Hindu Goddesses – Lakshmi-Saraswati-Durga. Considering the resemblance, it is fit for interpretation as to whether such art-form diffused from the east to west or the other way. Interestingly, not only tradition, culture and heritage of such depiction continue in India but also the Goddesses are worshipped still with the same age-old customs in periodical rites, rituals and ceremonies, whereas in the west or non-Indian tradition such practice had disappeared. (some are shown below- second one is not a coin).



Cybele, the mother goddess (Roman)



Babylonian Goddess



Dea Caelestis holding thunderbolt and riding on lion (193-211 CE)



Nana on lion



"Dancing Lakshmi" issued by Pantaleon (190-180 BCE), a Bactrian king.



Different Greek goddesses, but resembling Indian / Hindu.



A Roman mother goddess



MS 5160/1  
Name of owner or scribe.  
Syria, 10th-8th c. BC

Thus, how the Vedic gods and Goddesses depicted coins in other civilizations have been dated earlier, whereas in Indian counterpart dated to only first century onwards is surprising. The Indian coins of Gold, Silver, Copper etc., have been controlling the economy and society.

D. C. Sircar<sup>3</sup> lamented about the condition of "Numismatic Studies in India" and the callous attitude of the Government and historians in dealing with the subject in 1968. Perhaps, the position has not changed or come to a worst stage. Ever since the British started studying Indian coins and publishing articles in the Journals of Royal Asiatic society of Great Britain & Ireland, Numismatic Journal, *Historio Numorum* etc., there have been sudden spurt of discovery of coins and hoard of coins from different places of India. And the discovery of Roman coins were reported every where. Thus, the appearance of so many coins suddenly did not make Indians surprising. So also disappearance of crores of Indian coins did not bother them either. Perhaps, they did not



know that the European Companies too took away crores of such coins with them, whenever, they returned to their European destination – Copenhagen (Danish), Amsterdam (Dutch), Portugal (Portuguese), Paris (French) or London (British).

Their museum and achieve collections faithfully record that the Indian coins were brought there by the Jesuit and Protestant missionaries, mathematicians and astronomers<sup>4</sup>, botanists and chemists, doctors and pathologists, besides, governors and Commanders, clerks and accountants and others<sup>5</sup>. Some examples are mentioned for illustrative purposes: The collections Colin Mackenzie, C. P. Brown, Walter Williams and others included lakhs of coins, but they were not returned to India<sup>6</sup>. When Peter Anker, the Governor of Tranquebar left India on 07-02-1806, his "large collections" included "drawings, maps, idols, coins, artifacts, books and gifts .....". When the Indian rulers paid tributes to the British, they included Gold and Silver coins, as they had to pay through nose many times to avoid the European torture. Now, numerous websites declare ancient Indian coins for sale starting with 800 BCE! Thus, how coins appeared in and disappeared from India may be an interesting topic for study and it is taken up.

### India's First Coins

As per literary evidences, India had Gold coinage since Vedic period. Such trend continued and exhibited in the coinage of others. However, the gold coins issued by the Kushana and Gupta Kings are available. Scholars have pointed out and recognized the fact that gold coins were minted only for bullion value and melted for the manufacture of jewelry whenever required. However, non-golden coins have been found to be qualified as "the first coins" of India. Dr. Nupam Mahajan has displayed such coins in his website. The so-called first Indian coins displayed are:



First coin of India (?)	Taxila Janapada	Taxila Janapada	Ashmaka Janapada	Kalinga Janapada
Before 5th Century BC	600-303 BC	5th Century BC	600-350 BC	500-350 BC
Minted in Madhyadesha?, found near Mathura	Silver, Satamana Bent bar	silver, 1/8th Karshapana	Silver, Double Karshapana	Silver, half Karshapana
Silver unit Seven punch marks	Two septa-radiate marks at ends, Uniface	Septa-radiate single punch Mark, Uniface	Pulley Type, Uniface	Uniface
Weight: 7.14 gm	Weight: 11.3 gm (100 ratti)	Weight: 1.4 gm (4 ratti)	Weight: 6.7 gm	Weight: 1.6 gm

Here, dating has been done based on comparative method and no independent or absolute method has been adopted, thus keeping the date around 600 BCE.

### Coin Manufacturing Technology

The coins implies the coin manufacturing technology involving drawing or sketching, mould or die making, smelting and melting, alloying, punching, casting, etc. The accompanied technology is furnace, maintenance of



required temperature and tempering techniques. The available coinage proves that Indians used two methods of manufacturing coins<sup>7</sup>:

- Punching and Casting

As they were experts in metallurgical skill since c.6500 BCE, there is nothing surprising to place existence of such coinage from that period. However, the non-availability or disappearance of coinage could be due to melting and recycling because of the value of the metals used. About the fate of Indian Gold coins, ironically, a foreign coin dealer<sup>8</sup>, that too, a non-Indian laments like this:

*"Indian Gold coins: Perversely given the popularity of gold in India, there are not many collectors of Indian coins in general or Indian gold coins in particular. We are not certain that over centuries, many ancient rare and ultimately valuable gold coins have been melted and made into jewelry. Although we have Indians amongst our customers, mainly doctors, most only buy bullion coins such as sovereigns, krugerrands and Canadian maples. We think this is a great shame because we are sure that there are many interesting and many affordable Indian gold coins currently available, and even now there are probably remains being melted down".*

The middle-east Sheikhs and Japanese tycoons buy Islamic and Buddhist coins respectively, artifacts etc., with prestige to preserve their antiquity. But, the Indians or Indian born rich and millionaires, perhaps think differently. Anyway, the poor dealer may consign such coins to furnace. Surprisingly, the laboratory / metrological testing of Gold coins showed that more than 90% of Kushana and Gupta coins were almost 99% pure. In fact, the percentage of purity comes down thereafter. Therefore, evidently, the earlier golden coins must have been melted for bullion value. Thus, the present coin dealers would be more benefited by melting than by selling Indian gold coins leading to disappearance of Indian gold coins.

#### Why Tribal Coins Should have Vedic, Itihasa and Puranic Names?

It is interesting or ironical to note that the so-called tribal coins have been issued by the dynasties that had not only derived their names but also traced their origins to Vedic, Itihasa and Puranic period and genealogy<sup>9</sup>. Actually, the western scholarship wanted to hide the facts under "tribal", as otherwise, the word to be used "gana" or Janapada" proves the ancient Kingdoms existed before Alexander. K. D. Bajpai<sup>10</sup> suggested already the usage of Janapada for tribal and local coins, as it is used in literature to signify 'a community or people of a particular geographical and cultural unit'. In fact, "gana" stands for "republic", thus, the traditional countries of Bharatvarsha falling under the "56 deshas". They were Agratyas, Audumbaras, Kulutas, Kunindas, Rajanyas, Trigartas, Vemakis, Vrishnis, and Yaudheyas. Incidentally, all were hailing from the "Sapta-Sidhu" area (Greater Punjab). The Gods depicted in their coins were Shiva, Karttikeya, Six-headed Shasti / Shanmukhi, Lakshmi, etc. After the Mahabharat war, the scattered groups must have broken away from Bharat and started living separately. Thus, such civilizations exhibited Indian-Hindu resembling features in their exhibited material culture.



Karttikeya with cock and lance



Karttikeya and Lakshmi





Symbol of Shiva - Bull



So "the million dollar" question arises as to "how tribal" were "these tribes" to have such metallurgical skills of smelting, melting, alloying, die-making, punching, casting and producing coins before Lydians? And these punch-marked coins or tribal coins have been found throughout India unlike other coins. Were these tribes ruling entire India then, before the advent of Jainas, Buddhas and Mauryas? How they could have had such excellence in arts and sciences? Perhaps, they could have learned from the mythical King Sesac<sup>11</sup> (1010-956 BCE) son of Ammon or Amon or Ammon-Ra, who was made to invade India in 971 BCE! The following are the Silver punch-marked coins issued by the tribes:



Punch-marked silver coins

Punch-marked silver coins



Vidharba Silver coated coins dated to c.600-300 BCE

So, it is surprising as to how the tribals were issuing Silver coins also? Thus, the so-called "Tribal coins" are not tribal coins, but the pre-Mauryan Kingdoms existed in the Sapta-Sidhu region and issued coins dated back to c.800 BCE. Above all, specifically, they contain Brahmi script with Sanskrit and Prakrit inscriptions. Thus, they could not relish the "tribal Brahmi script" going before "Asokan Brahmi". As this, pre-Alexander chronology has been very inconvenient to their "sheet-anchor theory", the British wanted to suppress, but the new findings expose their suppression. So, one need not be surprised, if all these "tribal coins" are disappearing soon from India, Afghanistan or elsewhere! Incidentally, nothing has been reported or mentioned about "tribal gold coins", to find out whether Silver preceded or proceeded gold before going to issue copper coins and then plating coins with Silver.

### The Puzzles of Gupta Coins

The mystery of Gupta coins has been made history by the British, European and western scholars and historians. Ironically, very few Gupta coins are available in India for study by Indian numismatists, as most of them were taken away by the British scholars, experts and rulers. Of which only a part has been in display in the museums of London, Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Lisbon, New York etc., and most of the coins were already melted and used up.

- S. K. Maity<sup>12</sup> reported that the number of Gold coins, he analyzed did not tally with the number given in the Vincent A. Smith's "Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum Vol. I", since a few of the coins mentioned



in the Catalogue were missing from the museum. Thus, the British must have removed the crucial Gupta coins from the museum. A. S. Altekar reports the missing of gold coins from the Bayan hoard.

- The test reports of John Walker (Keeper of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London), John Allan and others varied differently as pointed out by S. K. Maity<sup>13</sup>.
- "The Chandragupta Kumaradevi type" coins were considered to have been issued by Samudragupta, but actually issued by Chandragupta himself analyzing the content of the gold<sup>14</sup>.
- Vincent Smith<sup>15</sup> opines, "That the copper coins of Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta which resemble in device and legend the silver coins of those kings, were for the most part a real copper coinage and merely forgeries of the silver coinage" (as Silver coins had copper core).
- The silver-plated Copper coins of Guptas made the British uncomfortable, because of the technology involved behind.
- The coin technology of both Kushana and Gupta resemble same in many aspects based on the metrological and chemical analytical reports.
- R. D. Banerjee<sup>16</sup> referred to two Copper coins of Samudragupta purchased by a private collector, but unfortunately, these coins are untraced.

Here also, the westerners were surprised about the following metallurgical skills of Indians:

- The alloying techniques involved in maintaining purity of Gold up to 99%.
- Making gold coins with even lesser type - 65% gold.
- Silver coated on Copper - actually, these coins are technologically superior, but dubbed by Vincent Smith as "forged". Yes, it is technically forged, i.e, Copper core coated with Silver and circulated as "Silver coins".
- Thus, whether such coating was done electrically or by dipped method or powder coating, they were bewildered, so instead of giving credit to the hidden technology applied by the Indians, they accused Guptas for manufacturing "forged coins"!

### Chanakya's Injunctions on Counterfeits

That Chanakya<sup>17</sup>, the author of Arthashastra deals with Treasury, Coinage, Coin Examiner, Counterfeits, the punishment to those who bring such fake coins etc., proves the well established norms for Mint and Monetary administration. All these could not have been evolved just like that around c.300 BCE. This again proves the continuance of technology of minting connected with metallurgy. The IVC technology of smelting, casting, moulding, must have continued from 1950 BCE to 300 BCE. This accounts for the so-called "Tribal coins" of different "Tribal dynasties" incidentally coinciding with the Puranic dynasties and chronology.

Anyway, Vincent Smith did not say that the Guptas copied such technology from the tribals. Had he mentioned, the link of 'tribal coins' with 'Royal coins' would have been unwittingly implied and therefore, he might have kept quite.

### Roman Coins in India

Roman coins in India, particularly in south India has been shrouded with mystery, as they were in circulation even after their cessation in their own country. Parameshwari Lal Gupta<sup>18</sup>, Stuart Piggott<sup>19</sup> and other scholars<sup>20</sup> have raised the following questions about the findings of Roman coins in South India:

1. Was it a trade?
2. Was it a tribute paid to the Indian Kings by the Romans?
3. If it was a tribute, was it due to trade practice or the Romans were defeated by the Indians?



4. If the South Indian traders accepted them for bullion value, why they did not melt instead of keeping them in circulation?
5. The availability of Roman coins in the strata has been taken as "*Roman datum*" and the dates of settlements found below and above the deposits containing them and the tombs containing pottery of types which occurred in the settlement, could all be put into their correct chronology?
6. The faked Roman coins had been in circulation up to 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Then, how to differentiate them from the genuine ones?

In fact, P. L. Gupta has suggested that scholars should thoroughly study the aspect of Roman coins in South India.

Peter Berghaus opines that most of the Roman gold and silver coins found were imitations and counterfeits. He had arrived at this conclusion based on the basis of defective legends, or poor quality of production of portraits and deviation in weight. As Roman gold coins were in great demand, unscrupulous forgers used the opportunity to mint "Roman coins" locally. In this connection, the terracotta coin moulds of Roman emperor Tiberius found at the Talkad excavations and at Banavasi (surface find) prove the fact. Coins with two holes at the top were evidently meant for making necklaces. Similarly, Augustus coins found with deep chisel cut marks prove conclusively that the coins were used for melting for making jewelry.

Brajadulal Chattapadhyaya doubts the Roman coins found in South India as no stratigraphical studies confirm their chronological relation to social or economic processes of Indians pointing out as to how Sewel discovers "*Roman coins of Honorius and Arcadius in the bed of Vaigai and as well as a Chinese coin from the same place*", implying Roman coins could be dated with the Chinese to 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

The Roman coins raised questions in other places also. About the finding of Roman coins in Iceland, there had been controversy, as they were reportedly brought there at the time when they were still normal currency of the day, or at some later period. Therefore, they were brought there and dropped to be found later<sup>21</sup>.

### Why literate Mauryans were Ignorant of Minting Coins?

It is surprising to note that none talks about coins Chandragupta, Bindusara, Asoka the Great etc. Only the "tribal coins" are attributed to the Mauryas! When Mauryas were ruling from Pataliputra, it is not known as to why the Taxila-Punjab type tribal coins should be attributed to them? When the Mauryans could excel in all aspects and Kautilya could anticipate counterfeits in his days, how such Great Emperors were indulging in just issuing "tribal-like" and "punch-mark" coins? They could have issued Gold coins. Particularly, when the boundaries of Asoka could touch so many kingdoms extending up to middle-east, is it not intriguing that he could issue only these coins?

There appears something wrong in such exigency, just like the Chandragupta was building with wood, whereas, Asoka starting with stone! Why such evolution could not have taken place in the case of coinage? Had the grandson not learned properly or the successors of Alexander did not teach them to mint coins? Had they issued gold coins, according to their political dominance, at least some quantity should have been survived. Or they must have lived in a period anterior to the one - generally, as now they are placed, so that the gold coins issued could have vanished completely, because of the long chronology gap.

### Dating of the Coins

The dating of the Indian coins has been made on comparative or relative method, mainly comparing with the Brahmi script reportedly used by Asoka. Thus, the dating of the coins would be within the "sheet anchor chronology". However, applying the stratigraphical principles of archaeology, when punch-marked coins were found, they were dated to 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. For example, when G. R. Sharma conducted excavations at Kausambi during 1957-59, he could discover punch-marked coins at the second cultural period marked to 885-605 BCE. A. L. Basham, C. L. Fabri and others have pointed out as to how the IVC symbols continued in punch-marked coins. K. D. Sethna, A. Sundara, Vedaprakash and others have shown as to how the IVC art-form continued to





Chandragupta Maurya

Bindusara



Asoka



Kunala Maurya

Coin pictures from: [www.ancientcoins.ca/india.html](http://www.ancientcoins.ca/india.html)

Mauryan Empire through the intervening civilization. Thus, A. Sundara assigns Asoka to c.1200-1000 BCE based on archaeological evidences and K. D. Sethna to c.750 BCE. Therefore, scholars could consider the possibility to bridge the gap between the IVC and Mauryan periods, so that the Indian historical processes could be explained satisfying all the existing evidences of archaeology, numismatics, epigraphy etc., at one side and literary evidences – Vedas, Itihasas, Puranas at the other side.

### Discovering the Coins of Alexander in India

In spite of the claims made by the western scholars, no coin of Alexander has been found in the India extragangum, as the entire story is based only on "literary reference" (see below for Allan's comments). Desperately, they tried to discover at least the image of Alexander in two of so called memorial badges supposedly issued in memory of the Jhelum war between Alexander and Porus and one found in Persia and another in Babylonia.

Hade<sup>22</sup> tried to find Alexander engraved on it, but Gardner<sup>23</sup> strongly disputed it pointing out that it was used by the Greeks in Bactria between 330 and 125 BCE. Hade wrote extensively on this topic, but curiously remained silent about Gardner's view insisting that that it might be used in Taxila. Interestingly, Macdonell opposed both views. As usual, Vincent Smith<sup>24</sup> came to rescue and concurred with Hade. In second badge, in fact, the persons raiding on horse were attacked by the King-like person sitting on the elephant with a spear. Here, it is surprising to note the Victor to be attacked and about to fall from the horse. Hade identified the falling figure as "Alexander". The same picture as depicted in the coin / medallion is shown below and one can find the differences:





1. The lance is missing from the second person sitting on the elephant.
2. The lances in his left hand also missing.
3. The corner of the first has been filed off to remove such details or it must have worn out.
4. The horse man has been well within the coin in the first in spite of the filing.



[www.bible-history.com/archaeology/greece/2-al...](http://www.bible-history.com/archaeology/greece/2-al...)

A



Front

Back

B

[http://www.ancientbattles.com/Historicon/Historicon2003\\_files/AlexDemoScenario/AlexPyrusCoin.jpg](http://www.ancientbattles.com/Historicon/Historicon2003_files/AlexDemoScenario/AlexPyrusCoin.jpg)



C



Coin commemorating Alexander's campaigns in India, struck in Babylon around 323 BC. Obv: Alexander standing, being crowned by Nike, fully armed and holding Zeus' thunderbolt. Rev: Greek rider, possibly Alexander, attacking an Indian battle-elephant, possibly during the battle against Porus. Courtesy: [www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/LX/WarElephant.html](http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/LX/WarElephant.html)

Elephant walking r., carrying on his back two warriors and pursued by a horseman prancing, towards whom they turn back, one of them attempting to pierce the horseman with a backward and downward thrust of his lance, while the other, with raised r. arm, threatens to hurl at him a javelin. [Num. Chron., 1906, Pl. I. 8.] - courtesy <http://www.snible.org/coins/hn/>

Interestingly, Vincent A. Smith shows a similar figure in his book "The Oxford History of India" (1928 edition, p. 63), as "POROS MEDAL". Here, the person depicted as "Alexander" on the obverse differs very much from the "person" depicted above.

Now, the differences in the above figures are discussed:

1. In the first figure (A), the corner has been well rounded off with edge.
2. In A., the angel garlanding the person is very clear. In C, half of it is worn out.
3. B differs in showing obverse-reverse.
4. C appears to be more circular than A and B.
5. In any case, one cannot see "Alexander".
6. Hade, Gardner and others mentioning it as a coin, whereas Vincent Smith and others recording it as a medallion / Medal is intriguing.

Therefore, there is a reason to believe that the objection of Gardner to Hade "engrave" Alexander. This proved that they might have planted the badges found Persia and Babylon in Taxila and tried to match with their hypothesized history. This is very dangerous and unethical too for historians or the European bureaucrats turned historians and archaeologists to indulge in such frauds by planting the badges from one place to another. Scholars, historians and numismatists should look into this aspect.

### Hindu Raja "Presents Signati Argenti" to Alexander

The main myth floated by the British, western and modern historians is that Indian history starts only from the invasion of Alexander, which they have characteristically mentioned as "Sheet anchor of Indian history". This, they used to mention in every context, whether it is number system or mathematics, astrology or astronomy, art or architecture, painting or sculpture, music or dance, coin or currency. For this, they adopt and adapt different stories, conditions and circumstances forgetting history. "Lydian manufacturing Greek coins around 700 BCE" is taken to beat Indians in this context. However, they themselves contradict with each other because of the facts. To quote Alexander Cunningham<sup>25</sup>.

*"Until very lately it was the popular belief that the Indians were ignorant of the art of coinage until the time of Alexander. This popular error I refuted some 25 years ago [i.e., in 1866 (1891-25=1866)], by quoting the statement of Q. Curtius that Alexander, on his arrival at Taxila, was presented by the Raja with 80 talents of coined silver (signati argenti)"*

John Allan<sup>26</sup> (1884-1955) quoting the same source interprets that, -

*"The earliest literary reference to Indian coinage is the statement of Quintus Curtius, Vit. Alex. viii. 12. 42, that Omphis, king of Taxila, presented eighty talents of coined silver (signati argenti lxxx talenti) to Alexander the Great, which has generally been taken as evidence of the existence of coinage in India about 325 BC" (emphasis added).*

Not only that, he adds in the footnote -

*"We cannot follow Thomas (PE., i. 223) and Cunningham (Num. Chron. 1873, p. 211) in finding similar allusion in ὑπὸ βασιλέως Ἀλεξάνδρου of Arrian, Alex. Anab. 6. 16".*



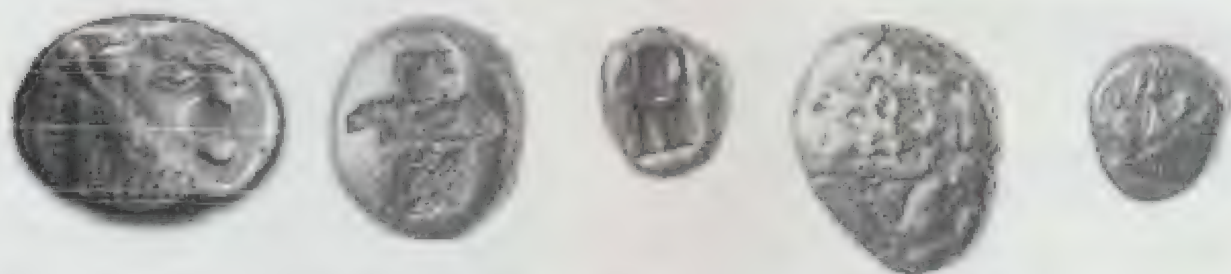
So, even when the Greek sources show that Indians had coins before Alexander, the westerners refuse to accept and dub them as "literary reference", that is not historical evidence, but when anything favorable to them, they immediately stick to their guns asserting that the same sources are "historical evidence". Therefore, their intention is very clear that they want to deny the existence of Indian coins before c.325 BCE., however, that is not correct.

### Where were the First Coins "Manufactured"?

As the modern and western historians insist and maintain that the first coins were Greek which made in Lydia<sup>27</sup> about 640 BCE, they refuse to recognize coins minted earlier to this date. They<sup>28</sup> say that, -

*"In Asia Minor, sometime about 700 BC, the Lydians hit upon the idea of shaping electrum, a natural alloy of gold and silver, into bean-shaped lumps of fixed weight and purity and stamping them with official symbols. By 550 BC, the practice of striking coins was established in all the important trading cities throughout the known world. Although most Greek coins portrayed gods or goddesses, coins of the Roman Empire offered portraits of the emperors. Because Islam prohibits graven images....."*

Some of the Lydian coins are shown below for reference:



These are globules of electrum, a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver made crudely stamping with incuse punches without any definite weight. On the other hand, the Indian coins in spite of dubbing as "tribal coins" were produced with established technology. In any case, Lydians "hit upon the idea of shaping electrum" and not credited with any metallurgy or technology of manufacturing coins. Therefore, it is illogical to believe that the Indians with their 3000-year-old metal technology to sit idle waiting for others to come and learn the art of coin-making from them. Therefore, only the people with technology could be manufacturing and exporting and not the Lydians or Greeks, who were not even heard of in 3000 BCE.

As the Indians were the coin manufacturing technology, they received orders from others for manufacturing their coins. Thus, the Rajasthan areas were minting Copper coins, South Indian mints Gold coins, Madhyapradesh other alloyed coins depending upon the orders. Of course, later all Indian mints must have been manufacturing all coinage. This explains the availability of the so-called foreign coins in India without involving trade. The surprise of P. L. Gupta and others also could be explained with this interpretation.

R Krishnamurthy<sup>29</sup> has reported the findings of Greek-Roman coins from Karur on and off. However, the coins depicted show that they were completely worn out, dog-eared, disfigured. The figures could not be discerned definitely from the coins shown in the plates, as they have been completely worn-out, eroded and scoured. The eye-copy drawings have been evidently drawn forcefully to bring out the interpretation, as they could be drawn and discerned in other possible ways also according to one's perception, conception and depiction. Thus, such coins found at Karur can be interpreted that Karur might be one of the minting centres of India supplying coins to those countries from the South India or supplying to India itself, when the circulation stopped in Rome.

### The Mohammedan and Moghul Melting of Indian Coins

Initially, the Mohammedans who invaded and looted Indian cities and villages took away Gold and Silver coins along with other booty. Later, the settled Moghuls had also seized, confiscated and collected large amount of valuable Indian coins. As most of the coins contained Hindu Gods, Goddesses and other religious symbols, they took it as sanctified duty to erase such symbols of Satanism. Thus, they melted and converted crores of gold and silver coins into jewels so that they adorned their wives and concubines. Many times, the smugglers, thieves,



looters, including the so-called Mohammedan invaders and rulers melted the coins to erase the identity, so that they could be sold easily as ingots or jewels.

Jahangir minted Zodiacal coins recording in his memoir, *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri*, "At this time it entered in my mind that in place of month they should substitute a figure of the constellation which belong to the month. For instance, in the month of Farwardin the figure of a ram, and in Urdibihist the figure of a bull. Similarly, in each month that a coin was struck, the figure of a constellation was to be on one face as if the sun was emerging from it. This usage is my own and had never been practiced until now. Today, only 3 museums in world, the Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris, Berlin museum and British museum are known to have all the 12 zodiacal coins. Only three are shown for illustrative purpose:



Because of their 'non-Islamic' nature, Jahangir's successors recalled these coins from circulation and melted them in Royal mints. But because of their tremendous popularity, they were extensively imitated and restruck ever since they were recalled from circulation. So one could imagine about the coins in circulation in other parts of India, where the coins depict Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

#### **Coins Going to Scrap Dealers for Melting**

According to Andrew Burnett, the Seleucid coins may have reached their Indian destination along with late Roman copper coins of fourth and fifth century AD, nearly six or seven centuries after these were struck (10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century), as scrap metal since there was a demand for such bronze coinage<sup>30</sup>. Thus, once an empire disappeared or lost power, the issued coins had only "metal value" and therefore, such coins melted and used for the manufacture of Icons.

#### **The British Melting "Obsolete Coins"**

The British Government not only took away of crores of Indian coins to England, but also resorted to melt them for bullion value. For example, in 1886-87, they swooped down on the palace of Maharaja of Scindia and unearthed 3,18,37,783 Silver coins which had been buried in pits and wells in the premises of the palace. Not only that, they also melted them declaring as "obsolete" and reportedly credited as part of the sum forming Gwalior Durbar loan yielding interest<sup>31</sup>.

In another case, 9,40,000 silver coins weighing 9,23,179 Tolas were discovered in 1956 from the digging of the lawn of Hatwaa Raja palace at Chhapra, Saran district of Bihar. They were found in 59 brass and copper jars. However, D. C. Sircar<sup>32</sup> reported in 1968 that the fate of the coins was not known. So within 12 years, (1968-1956) coins disappeared.

#### **Looting from the Sits of IVC (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

The illegal excavations at IVC were going on by the Tribal leaders since starting of 19<sup>th</sup> century, till their activities were curtailed by the official excavations started by the ASI<sup>33</sup>. By that time, many artifacts with valuable metal objects including coins were smuggled out and sold to art collectors of European countries. In fact, the British



and Russian troops too enjoyed the benefit officially and unofficially<sup>34</sup>. Under the grip of "Russia-phobia", the British had continuous military operations to stop them from entering into Afghanistan. The armed personnel always eyed for gold and other valuables and stole even from the dead bodies on the fields or elsewhere.

### Kabul Looting in 1993 Made Disappearance of 30,000 Indian Coins

In May 1993, the Taliban attacked the Kabul museum with the detailed instructions from Afghan and Pakistani antiquities dealers. More than 50,000 ancient coins were there of which, nearly 30,000 connected with the antiquity of India dated back to c.800 BCE. But they disappeared from the museum and reportedly sold to private collectors in US, Europe and Japan through the Afghan and Pakistani smugglers<sup>35</sup> (Hizbe Wahadat, Hizbe Islami and other Taliban / terrorist groups involved in drug-arms-antiquity smugglings). In Peshawar<sup>36</sup>, two 1500-year old heads of the Hindu god Shiva were available for \$7000 each and the Indian Ivory carvings of 2<sup>nd</sup> century for sale in Islamabad<sup>37</sup> for \$600,000 each!

Interestingly, when an Indian delegation under T. N. Ramachandran visited Afghanistan in May 1956, they studied the collections of the Kabul museum and visited various sites including Jalalabad, Ghazni, Kandahar, Farah, Herat, Mazar-e-sharif, Haibak, Qunduz, Bamiyan and Begram. After returning in July 1956, they reported that they had seen thousands of coins of Kushana, Kalachuri, Tomara, Pala and many tribal dynasties.

### Why Were coins Forged?

That forged coinage was there during the Mauryan period is shown by Arthashastra. In western history, the forgery, fakes and frauds have been very common<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, the reasons for forging coinage may be due to one of the following reasons:

- Monetary value – gold and silver coins issued by the government may be cheaper at one stage, when the economy is strong.
- At other times, counterfeited coins serve the purpose under weak economic conditions.
- Religious sentiments – Charles J. Rodgers<sup>39</sup> points out that the rupees with Kalima and the four companions' name were considered precious to Muslims and hence they were forged and sold for the intrinsic value.
- To destabilize economy – duplicate, coins with less purity etc., destabilize economy of a Kingdom or status of a person, who possessed in those days.
- During modern times, to cheat collectors, forged-fake-duplicate coins are made for quick money.
- Often they were restruck for presentation purposes as in the case of Jahangir's Zodiac coins.

### Conclusion

The British and westerners have done excellent work in systematically organizing and studying Indology in many aspects. They have brought out volumes of Archaeological Survey of India, Epigraphica Indica etc., throwing light on Indian history. However, it is unfortunate that there has been bias and prejudice against India and that has made them to suppress many facts from Indians as pointed out in the context.

From the above discussion, it can be noted that the following areas are yet to be researched properly:

1. Absence of Vedic coins, but the depiction of Vedic Gods and Goddesses in the non-Vedic and non-Indian civilizations. The mention of Vedic Gods in the Bongozkoi inscription dated to c.1450 BCE can be noted here.
2. The date of Tribal coins going beyond 600 BCE i.e, pre-Mauryan period, which is important for Indian history. As G. R. Sharma's stratigraphical dating takes punch-coins to as late as c.9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, such exigency has to be studied meticulously.



3. The importance of gold coins in Indian context, as compared to others. The significance of gold is very much felt in the Vedic rituals, rites and ceremonies. The same continue even today with the dominance of gold in Indian society one way or the other in every walk of Indian society, thus maintaining the largest consumer of the gold in the world.
4. In spite of the claim of producing first coins, the Lydians had done it only with naturally available "electrum" and not by actually melting and alloying of metals and therefore, they did not actually know the alloying technique.
5. Other civilizations, particularly, the Greeks gave importance to Silver and then turned towards to gold, whereas, Indians started with gold.
6. Therefore, numismatically also the gap between IVC and Mauryan period cannot be explained, unless they are bridged with tribal coins. Here, historians should come out of the "sheet anchor chronology" imposed by the British that Indian history cannot go back beyond the Alexander invasion.
7. As shown above, it is quite possible that the westerners have over emphasized the Alexander factor in Indian history, which is not necessary, as Vincent Smith himself confessed that the impact of Alexander on India is negligible.
8. As many ancient Indian coins have evidently been disappeared since ancient period and even during the reign of Mohammedans and European Companies, the disappearance of Indian coins had been enormous. Therefore, history has also gone with them.
9. Even today the disappearance has not stopped considering the activities of Talibans in the historically sensitive areas outside India and Taliban-type activists inside India.
10. Indian scholars should take more interest in Numismatics to study Indian coins. They can procure duplicates and copies for study.
11. Rich Indians can buy Indian coins to preserve their culture, tradition, heritage and civilization.

#### Notes and References

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  3. D. C. Sircar, *Studies in Indian Coins*, Motilal Banarasidas, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 37-47.
  4. K. V. Ramakrishna Rao, *The Transmission of Medical Knowledge from Tamizhagam to Europe (15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, to appear in the volume "History of Science and Technology in Medieval South India".
  5. K. V. Ramakrishna Rao, *European Scientists: Indian Chronology and Historiography*, XXth Session of South Indian History Congress held at Tiruvananthapuram from Feb.25-27, 2002.
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- for complete details of the paper, see *Indian Calendar and Chronology* (Seminar papers) held at Central Mining Research Institute, Dhanbad on August 9 & 10, 2003, pp.1-20.
6. Part of Indian palm-leaf books / manuscripts taken was returned but not the ancient coins and other valuable materials.
  7. B. N. Mukherjee, opt.cit, the minting of Kushana coins is explained under Chap.III "Style and Technique", pp. 33-44.
  8. <http://www.taxfreegold.co.uk/india.html>
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22. *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1887, pp. 177-184.
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24. Smith, *Early History of India*, p. 76.
25. Alexander Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India from the Earliest Times down to the Seventh Century A. D.*, p.v of Preface, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1990.
26. John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, London Museum, London, 1936, p. xiv.
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